



# Representative Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

District 1 Fairbanks

## House Bill 236 Sponsor Statement

*"An Act extending the Alaska senior benefits payment program."*

House Bill 236 would extend the Senior Benefits Program sunset clause to 2022, ensuring another four years of support for low income seniors across Alaska. Without action, the program would end in 2018.

The Senior Benefits Program protects low-income seniors by providing them with modest cash assistance to pay for expenses like food, heating, electricity, transportation and prescription medication.

The program was established in 2007 and currently provides assistance to nearly 12,000 Alaskans ages 65 and older with incomes at 75 percent, 100 percent, and 175 percent of the federal poverty level. Assistance ranges from \$47 to \$250 a month for eligible seniors depending on income and the size of the appropriation from the Alaska State Legislature. The Senior Benefits Program is a successor to the Longevity Bonus, which was created in 1972.

This important program protects seniors who have spent a lifetime building this state. It lends a small hand to low-income seniors who need assistance to help make ends meet. Terminating this program would put thousands of seniors at risk for losing means to buy essential items necessary for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

I respectfully request your support.